

A KUBRAWĪ TREATISE ON MYSTICAL VISIONS: THE *RISĀLA-YI NŪRIYYA* OF 'ALĀ' AD-DAWLA AS-SIMNĀNĪ

The practice of *dhikr* is a central component of Sufi life and instruction. The word is normally translated as "recollection" or "remembrance," referring to the systematic repetition of God's name or of one of His attributes. At heart, this constitutes a meditational exercise, the goal of which is to rid the mystic of preoccupation with the self and other worldly concerns, thereby devoting him or herself completely to the contemplation of God. Various Sufi orders have prescribed the content and method of *dhikr* for their adherents, and the differences between them are so distinct as to constitute one of the primary distinguishing characteristics of these orders.¹

Although the content of these *dhikr* exercises is accessible in guide-books and compendia written by Sufi shaykhs as well as in a number of secondary works, very little information is available describing the experiences a mystic undergoes while practicing *dhikr*. The *Risāla-yi nūriyya* of 'Alā' Ad-Dawla As-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) constitutes one of the few treatises providing such information.

Simnānī was a prominent figure in the Kubrawī Sufi order. In its formative period, the Kubrawiyya appears to have been a loose conglomeration of individuals who derived their mystical affiliation from a visionary Sufi named Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221). Their influence on Sufi thought and practice has been far reaching, and many subsequent orders in Iran, Central Asia, and India derive their mystical affiliation directly from these Kubrawī masters.²

¹ A survey treatment of the *dhikr* practices of a number of orders is found in Muḥammad ibn 'Alī as-Sanūsī, *As-salsabil al-mu'īn fi'l-tarā'iq al-arba'in*, printed in the margins of the same author's *Al-masā'il al-ashar* (Cairo: 1935).

² There is very little by way of doctrine, ritual or belief that identifies these early figures as belonging to one order. Despite the fact that Kubrā was himself a Sunni, two prominent Kubrawī shaykhs, Sa'd Ad-Dīn Ḥamūya (d. 650/1252) and his son Šadr Ad-Dīn (d. 722/1322), were Shī'īs. Kubrawī mystics are found on both sides of the debate over the doctrine of "Oneness of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), one of the main issues dividing Sufis in their day. Furthermore, they appear to have had no shared stance regarding involvement in politics: Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā allegedly met his death fighting the Mongols; Simnānī's teacher, Nūr Ad-Dīn al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 717/1317) maintained contact with the Ilkhanid court, while Simnānī himself was deeply involved in the intrigues of various princes and was respected by the Ilkhanid rulers. Wājyātū Khudābanda (r. 703/1304-716/1316) and Abū Sa'īd (r. 716/1316-736/1335). For a survey of Kubrawī history, see the introduction to Najm Ad-Dīn Dāya ar-Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, tr. Hamid Algar (Delmar: Caravan, 1982); also Marijan Molé, "Les Kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'Hégire," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 29 (1961), 61-142.

One of the distinguishing features of the Kubrawī order in its formative period is the emphasis placed upon visionary experiences. Colors and visions encountered in meditation are seen not only as markers signifying progress along the mystical path, but also as symptoms of psychic and spiritual troubles ailing the individual. As such, treatises on visionary experience function as a *materia medica* of spiritual ailments in addition to their primary use as manuals of mystical instruction. Descriptions of mystical visions are found in several Kubrawī works such as the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-jalāl* of Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā³ and the *Mirṣād al-ibād min al-mabdā' ila'l-ma'ād* of Najm Ad-Dīn Dāya ar-Rāzī (d. 654/1256).

One treatise, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya*, stands out for its explicit and systematized discussion of mystical lights and visions. Although color symbolism and its association with mystical advancement forms the basis of much of Simnānī's thought, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya* is the only work in which he provides a systematic description of these lights as they are encountered during the practice of *dhikr*.⁴

This work has sometimes been falsely attributed to Shihāb Ad-Dīn As-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and 'Alī-yi Hamadānī (d. 786/1385). Based on internal evidence, however, there can be no doubt that the treatise belongs to Simnānī: it is explicitly stated that the work was written at the request of a student named Muḥammad-i Khurd (possibly Khirād), who is known to have been one of Simnānī's closest disciples.⁵ The doctrines expressed in the treatise are identical to those found in Simnānī's other writings, and the style is also characteristically his.

The treatise begins by providing a general description of the forms of light found in the visible and invisible dimension. Simnānī then proceeds to the main subject of his treatise, which is a detailed outline of the lights encountered as one engages in mystical recollection (*dhikr*) in order to perfect one's spiritual nature. These lights are hierarchical, corresponding to the subtle substances (*laṭā'if*) or organs which make up the mystical body. In order to make his discussion more comprehensive, Simnānī additionally describes the light of Satan, and those of ablution and recollection.

³ Fritz Meier, *Die Fawā'ih al-Gamāl wa Fawātiḥ al-Galāl des Nagm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, no. 9 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957).

⁴ For a detailed discussion of Simnānī's life and thought, see Jamal J. Elias, *Sūfī Thought and Practice in the Teachings of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (PhD Dissertation: Yale University, 1991).

⁵ Iqbāl-i Sistānī, *Chihil majlis-i 'Alā' ad-dawla-i Simnānī*, ed. 'Abd ar-Raḥīm Ḥaqīqat (Tehran: Shirkat-i mu'allifān-u mutarjimān-i Mīrān, 1979); Ibn al-Karbalā'ī, *Rawḍhat al-jinān wa janāt al-janān*, ed. Ja'far Sulṭān al-Qurrā'ī (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjuma wa nashr-i kitāb, 1965); Zayn al-'Ābidīn-i Shirwānī, *Riyādh as-siyāḥa*, ed. Aṣghar Ḥamid Rabbānī (Tehran: Kitābforūshī-yi sa'dī, 1960), 525; Maṣūm 'Alī Shāh, *Tarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. M. Ja'far Mahjūb (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi bārānī, 1921), 2:339; S.M. Sadr, *Sharḥ-i aḥwāl-u alkār-u āsār-i Shaykh 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (Tehran: Dānish, 1955), 45.

In addition to its systematic treatment of lights and colors, the *Risāla-yi nūriyya* also contains graphic descriptions of the specific visions encountered along the mystical path. These include sparks, smoke, experiences of levitation, and visions of buildings and animals. Simnānī's descriptions are often vivid, relying on everyday objects as metaphoric points of reference.

Four manuscripts of this work are known to exist, representing two stemmae. The oldest is dated 851/1447 and is contained in a collection of treatises attributed to 'Alī-yi Hamadānī, a prominent Kubrawī mystic who was affiliated with Simnānī through two of the latter's disciples: Sharaf Ad-Dīn-i Mazdaqānī (d. 766/1364-65) and 'Alī-yi Dūsī (or Dūstī, d. 734/1334).⁶ The manuscript is clearly written, but is incomplete and contains many lacunae which are noted by the scribe.

The two other manuscripts belonging to the first stemma are both inaccurate. One is dated dhu'l-Ḥijja 1048/April 1639 but is incomplete.⁷ The second, though complete, cannot be accurately dated.⁸

By far the most valuable copy of the treatise is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library under the title *Risālat al-anwār*.⁹ Dated Sha'bān 899/May 1494, this manuscript is complete, and is accurately and clearly written. It is the sole representative of the second manuscript stemma.



[44r]¹⁰ In the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful.

Gratitude and thanks to the Creator Who, through love and perfect knowledge, changed the light of intention (*nūr-i irādat*) into the seed of the tree of bliss (*shajara-yi sa'ādat*) in the soil within the human being which is the invisible realm of the souls. With the power of omnipotence, He planted this seed therein and brought forth the tree of bliss, and bore it to the heaven of His intimacy. And with the wisdom of sovereignty, He brought forth the fruit of the light of sainthood (*nūr-i wilāyat*) from that tree, and raised it above all His beings and placed it at their head. And may there be countless blessings

⁶ MS. 4009, Kitābkhāna-yi Ganjibakhsh, Islamabad, pages 751-762 [abbreviated *Ganj*]. For more on 'Alī-i Hamadānī, see J.K. Teufel, *Eine Lebensbeschreibung des Scheichs 'Alī-i Hamadānī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962); G. Bowering, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Alī Hamadānī."

⁷ Private collection of Arif Naushahi [abbreviated *Naw*]. This manuscript was copied by Muḥammad Ghani, a disciple of Akhund Darwiza-yi Nangarhārī (d. 1048/1638).

⁸ MS. 4274, Kitābkhāna-yi dānishgāh, (Tehran) [abbreviated *Dān*]. Najib Māyil-i Hirawī has prepared an edition on the basis of this manuscript and MS. 4409, Kitābkhāna-yi Ganjibakhsh (*Muṣannifāt-i fārsī*) (Tehran: Shirkat-i intishārāt-i 'ilmi wa farhangī, 1990), 301-11.

⁹ MS. 1105, Carullah Efendi, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, folios 44r-48v [abbreviated *Car*].

¹⁰ Folio numbers in brackets refer to MS. 1105, Carullah Efendi.

and peace upon the purified spirit of the Prophet—it is only in the garden of His laws (*sharīʿat*) that this tree can reach fruition. And may [blessings] also be upon his family and companions who are the landlords of the “Master of Inner Perception” (*sāhib-i baṣīrat*, i.e. Muḥammad), and upon the saints and scholars (*awliyā wa ʿulamāʾ*) and the followers of his tradition who are the chaste gardeners of prophetic custom.

2. Know that it has been some time since the “champion of reality,” Muḥammad-i Khurd, who is one of my disciples, has desired that a treatise about the nature of illumination and the description of various lights be written for the guidance of the novice traveller and the satisfaction of the accomplished mystic. But I wished that these secrets should remain hidden from strange eyes, so I did not take his entreaties into consideration until this moment. Now the pen has set out to describe the Eternal One, and all volition has passed to my fingers, so that the figures which were drawn on the page of my heart are now reproduced on this page in summary form. God willing, may they be a source of pleasure for those who read them and proof for those who hear them, and may they remain far from the impure and hidden from outsiders.

3. Know, O friend, that God has illuminated your heart with “sacred lights” (*anwār qudsiyya*), which is what the light of a thing is called in actuality so that it may know itself and see all things and know them. It can see and know all things with it. This absolute light (*nūr-i muṭlaq*) is a particular attribute of God.

4. Know that the light of intention (*nūr-i irādat*) is earthly and the light of sainthood (*nūr-i wilāyat*) is celestial, as He says in His Glorious Book: “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth” (24:35). And the light of sainthood, which is His special attribute, cannot be seen except with the light of intention which is an attribute of His essence; it is for this reason that He says: “My saints are beneath My tents—no one knows them but Me.”¹¹ Once you know the meaning of this, know that, in the invisible dimension of the spiritual realm (*ghayb-i anfus*), light is associated with the inner mystery (*khafī*), spirit (*rūḥ*), inmost being (*sirr*), heart (*dil*), intellect (*ʿaql*), and soul (*nafs*),¹² and in the visible dimension of the spiritual realm (*shahādat-i anfus*) with the light of the eyes and the conceptual faculties which are stored in the brain. In the invisible dimension of the physical realm (*ghayb-i āfāq*) they are attributed to spirits of the angels and *jinn*, and in the visible of the physical realm (*shahādat-i āfāq*) with the sun, moon,¹³ stars, candles, and lamps.

¹¹ This is a non-canonical prophetic tradition.

¹² The manuscripts have conflicting lists. The mystery (*khafī*) does not appear in *Car*; *Ganj* does not contain intellect (*ʿaql*). The intellect does not ordinarily appear as a substance in Simnānī’s scheme of the spiritual realm.

¹³ Not in *Car*.

5. This is to say that when the mystic turns his face from the visible and invisible dimensions of the physical realm, he should also turn away from the visible of the spiritual realm and face the invisible of the spiritual realm. The first curtain that appears before him is turbid.¹⁴ As soon as he strikes the stone of his heart with the flint of the profession of faith, "There is no deity but God," the hidden fire which is placed in him becomes apparent, and he stands in the fireship of the soul (*ḥarrāqa-yi nafs*); he feeds it with the firewood of the body until it becomes ignited and that turbid curtain is transformed to dark blue. And as the fire becomes stronger and the firewood of existence is dried of the moisture of [remaining] morsels of sensual delight (*nadawāt-i luqmāt-i ḥuḏuḏī*), the colors become purer and the smoke is decreased. When the morsels (*luqmāt*) are entirely made up of what is just, then no smoke remains and a pleasant odor reaches the nose. Colorful lights also appear, and one witnesses [true] spiritualists.¹⁵ All that has been described results from the blessing of the strength of recollection and from guarding the morsel from the moisture of sensual delight.

6. The difference between the colors red, white, blue, yellow, black and green in this stage is the result of the strength of the fire of recollection. It may so happen that the essence of the fire of recollection may come out from behind the curtain and shout: "It is no other!" and say: "I am everything."¹⁶ It is necessary that the individual not be arrogant at this stage since this is the stage of the beginner in recollection.

7. The next fire which appears to the mystic on the path is undefined, but insofar as it can be described it is the fire of reality, and of recollection, and of love, and of longing, and of desire, and of anger, and of evil, and of the physical body of which the human being is composed. It is possible to differentiate between all these fires with signs that occur along the path, but the beginner should not [45r] attempt to differentiate between them without the guidance of a master lest Satan whisper suggestions to his soul in order to influence it, causing the novice to fall into the trap of arrogance and turn away from the path. It is, therefore, necessary that the disciple tell everything he

¹⁴ *Naw* and *Dān* add: "and is the curtain of the unseen of Satan."

¹⁵ *Dān*: "spiritual witnessing comes to pass;" *Car*: "one witnesses spirituality." This is probably a reference to the appearance of the mystical guide in the unseen realm (*shaykh al-ghayb*), a phenomenon frequently mentioned in Sufi texts.

¹⁶ *Simnānī* is paraphrasing a distinctive passive from the *Fawā'id al-jamāl wa fawā'id al-jalāl* of *Najm Ad-Dīn al-Kubrā* (d. 618/1221): "*dhikr* is a fire which neither abides nor spreads. When it enters an abode it says 'It is I and no other!' and that is a meaning of *lā ilāha illā 'llāh*. And if there is wood in the abode it burns it [the wood] and it becomes fire; if there is darkness in the abode it [the *dhikr*] becomes a light and destroys it [the darkness] and illuminates the abode; and if there is light in the abode it does not oppose it but this light is also recollection (*dhikr*) and the one who recollects (*dhikr*) and the object of the recollection (*madhkur*) which habit together, light upon light." (Meier, 4-5). This passage has been borrowed by other writers, most notably by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 708/1309) in his *Miftāḥ al-salāḥ wa-misbāḥ al-arwāḥ* (Cairo: Maṭba'a Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣabīḥ, n.d., 6).

sees to the master so that he [the master] may explain the mystical experiences and visions.

8. After this, when the existence soiled by the morsels of sensual delight and tarnished by the filth of disobedience is completely burned, and annihilation (*fanā'*) has been obtained as a result of the fire of recollection, then the light of the soul becomes apparent, the curtain of which is of a pleasing, dark blue color.

9. After this the light of the heart appears, the curtain of which is ruby red in color. Upon seeing this light the mystic experiences a great mystical taste (*dhawq*) which reaches his heart and causes him to obtain permanence (*istiqāmat*) on the path.

10. After this, the light of the inmost being (*sirr*) shines forth, the curtain of which is white. In this stage the mystic acquires knowledge of the delight of unveiling.¹⁷

11. After this the light of the spirit shines forth, the color of which is an extremely pleasing yellow. The soul is weakened and the heart is strengthened by seeing it.

12. After this the light of the inner mystery (*khafī*)— to which the Holy Spirit is a reference—is manifested. Its curtain is black, a pure and awesome blackness. Sometimes, through fear at seeing this black curtain, the mystic is annihilated and his body begins to tremble.

13. This is to say that the water of eternal life is arrayed in this darkness. Whoever makes a place for himself in the luminescence of the light of the Prophet (may peace be upon him) and remains in the shadow of obedience to him, like Khidr¹⁸ that person reaches the spring of the water of life which is the source of the lights of the attributes. He drinks a cupful of love from the heavenly river (*kawthar*) of grace and becomes deserving of that which the Lord, Most High, manifests to him through His attributes of beauty and majesty. At this stage, it is necessary that one not incline oneself towards the jewels (*jawāhir*) that are placed in this darkness, so that, like Alexander, he is not deprived of the spring of the water of life. He should travel in this darkness with sincere steps and keep his heart strong. Under no circumstances should he fear any of the dreadful forms and sounds [that he encounters]. The light of the inner mystery then becomes apparent from its potentiality in the invisible, and fear is transformed into intimacy.

14. When he has fulfilled the requirements of this stage, "absolute light" (*nūr-i mutlaq*) is manifested. This is a particular attribute of God, [45v] ex-

¹⁷ An alternate reading would be: "the inspirational knowledge of unveiling."

¹⁸ Khidr is an alias for the prophet Elias or Elijah who discovered the fountain of eternal life and thus attained immortality. He is also sometimes equated with Alexander's prime minister and with St. George. Khidr figures prominently in Islamic mysticism as the miraculous shaykh of the unseen who guides the most capable and fortunate mystics in their quest.

alted above indwelling in (*ḥulūl*) and union with (*ittiḥād*) any other, sanctified beyond association and disassociation. Its curtain is green in color, this greenness being a sign of the life of the tree of existence. The manifestation of the "absolute light" is not possible except in paradise. The effects that appear in it, that is in this manifestation, are: firstly, the annihilation¹⁹ of the mystic, then standing on the boundary, splitting of the sky, transformation of the earth, the flying of mountains, the dispersal of fixed stars, the changed rising of the sun and moon, the dimming of planets, the assemblage in open spaces, judgement of accounts on the balance, traversing the path, being thrown into the abyss, and being lifted up in levels.²⁰ When the mystic sees these signs, he should know himself to be in the eternal garden. Then he should pay complete attention to the beauty of His presence in accordance with the command "Neither did sight falter nor exceed the bounds" (53:17). He should not incline to anything so that the "holy essence" (*dhāt-i muqaddas*) may be manifested. Witnessing this instantaneously and miraculously returns light to his ailing eyes.

15. The manifestation of the light of the "real" (*nūr-i ḥaqq*) is exalted above all causes; nothing resembles it and it resembles nothing. The light of the inner mystery is manifested above the head and no light resembles it in the visible realm; it annihilates the mystic in the beginning of its manifestation. The light of the spirit is greater and more awesome than that of the sun, and is generally manifested behind the back, though sometimes also from the left and right. The light of the inmost being resembles that of Venus but is brighter and subtler than it; its manifestation occurs opposite the mystic and strikes his eyes, enters his body and annihilates him. When the mystic returns from that state, he sees much knowledge collected within him which he had never known or heard before. When this light falls on his eyes it permeates all parts of his body. He then sees himself like illuminated water, since his skin and the clothes that are on his body are illuminated. The light of the heart resembles the moon at first, although the true point (*nugṭa-yi ḥaqīqī*) that is in that moon as well as in the mystic's heart also appears. This light manifests itself on the left side of the mystic and annihilates him. Effort in the heart is decreased in this stage,²¹ and strange and wondrous lights and states occur to the mystic. The light of the [46r] soul surrounds the mystic. It resembles a polished door on which the sun is shining and from which the reflection is falling on a wall.

16. The manifestation of the light of the soul does not possess the power to annihilate. As for other lights that he sees, such as a candle, lamp or lantern: these are the lights of the spirits of humans and *jinn*,²² classed according to their

¹⁹ *Ḡanj*, *Naw*, and *Dān*: resurrection (*qiyāmat*).

²⁰ These are standard Islamic eschatological images. They are described in vivid detail in *ḥadīth* collections and in popular literature. See Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

²¹ *Naw*: "Effort is lost in his heart," *Dān*: "... and gets lost in the heart."

²² *Ḡanj*, *Naw*, and *Dān*: "the lights of the righteous spirits of humans and *jinn*."

differing abilities and disparate levels of attainment. The sky, stars, sun and moon that he sees comprise the heavens of the physical "human realm" (*malakūt-i mulk-i āfāq*) and the earth of the spiritual "Realm of Sovereignty" (*mulk-i malakūt-i anfus*). Sometimes, however, they are the lights of the archangels, and of the prophets and saints (upon them be peace).

17. The sparks of fire that he sees in the beginning are signs of the mystic having traversed the element of fire in his own body. His flying and walking through the air is a sign of his passing the element of air. Swimming in the sea or in rivers, and walking on water indicates that the mystic has passed the element of water in his body. Rising up above streets, houses and walls is a sign of the mystic's having traversed the earthy portion of himself which is also part of the composition of a human being. Each time the mystic's bodily parts are purified of the darkness of the morsels of sensual delight, beautifully colored, pure, swirling and swiftly moving fires become visible. He also witnesses clean, bright air; illuminated waters; wide streets; clean and majestic palaces; beautifully spread carpets; and sumptuous feasts laid out. But if the mystic's bodily parts are sullied by morsels of sensual delight and soiled by desires of the soul, he sees the opposite of this, such as frightening, slow-moving, smoke-filled fires in which he falls and is burned. He sees a cauldron into which he is hurled; he sees dark winds, lightening, frightening thunderbolts, and terrifying darkness in which he is trapped; turbid waters full of filth in which he falls and is polluted; and he sees narrow, dark streets, and ruined, filthy palaces in which he gets lost. Whenever he tries to come out of this wilderness, he is surrounded on all sides by high walls and hills of sand on which he walks with great difficulty. He sees deep, dark pits into which he falls. Dangerous beasts such as the snake,²³ scorpion, lion, leopard, bear, boar, and their like become apparent at this stage and cause him grief. [46v] The mystic must transcend the attributes of the inciteful soul in order to be delivered [from this state]. To the degree that the darkness of the morsels of sensual delight is exchanged for the purity of the morsels of that which is just, blame-worthy attributes are transformed into praiseworthy ones, and these detestable images are transformed into noble ones, such as sheep, deer, and colorful and melodious birds.

18. There comes a time when the animal form gets discarded and the individual is dressed in human form, at which point he sees himself as a mystical traveller. And as the purity of the morsel of that which is just increases, so too does its beauty. The good conduct of the mystic is the visible sign of the beauty of this invisible form.

19. There comes a time when the dark human person is illuminated; in fact, he becomes light personified.²⁴ At this stage, the mystic learns of the re-

²³ *Naw and Dān*: add "and ant (*mūr*)."

²⁴ *Naw and Dān*: "the dark person becomes like light personified."

ality of the subtle substance of I-ness (*laṭīfa-yi anāniyyat*), and of the cultivation of the acquired body (*badan-i muktasab*) which will abide with him. He obtains knowledge of the inner meaning of the words of the "master of ascetics," Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 162/778-9) (may God sanctify his spirit), who said: "Consider your food lawful, and do not stay awake by night and fast by day."²⁵ Exert great effort in obtaining lawful sustenance, which is a lawful morsel and with which the human body is strengthened and from which the profession of faith (*kalima-yi ṭayyiba*) is obtained, since the Prophet (upon him be peace) says:²⁶ "Any flesh that derives from the unlawful, is more appropriate for the fire [than for eating]."²⁷

20. Know for certain that the mystic's advancement on the path is four-sixths worship of God through observing the [lawful nature of] the morsel, one sixth recollection, and one-sixth following the guidance of the master. If, God forbid, he is plagued by an unlawful morsel, he should not eat even the minutest amount. If there is any doubt [about its lawful nature], he should abstain from satiation, and if it is lawful he should avoid excess. He should eat in such an amount that he remains hungry, so that he does not feel sluggish and be overtaken by sleep and turn away from recollection. He should observe moderation lest he fall into the misfortune of excess or deficiency (*ifrāt wa tafrit*). He must also guard against temptation. Know that God (may He be exalted) says: "Indeed, Allah does not love transgressors" (5:87); these are the people who forbid lawful morsels unto themselves. And He says: "Indeed, He does not love the wasteful" (7:31);²⁸ these are the people who engage in gluttony. "Eat and drink, but do not be wasteful" (7:31) should be taken as a model, and he should emulate the tradition of God's prophet (may peace be upon him) and not transgress it, since "to exceed perfection is an error." Thus today you must try to adorn your being with praiseworthy attributes and pleasant qualities so that [47r] tomorrow you might not be trapped in bitter agony in the deepest pits of hell. Embody noble characteristics so that you may be rewarded with eternal blessings in the gardens of Paradise.²⁹ Whosoever does not purify his body today yet hopes for Paradise is like a person who does not sow seeds in the ground in autumn but hopes for grain at harvest time. In fact, there is no one more bootless than him,³⁰ for the Prophet of God (may He be exalted) has said: "This world is the field from which

²⁵ This statement appears to completely contradict the beliefs and practices of Ibrāhīm b. Adham who is remembered as a Buddha-like prince who abandoned his worldly life for one of extreme asceticism.

²⁶ *Ganj* ends at this point.

²⁷ Paraphrase of a *ḥadīth* found in at-Tirmidhi, ad-Dārimī, and Ibn Ḥanbal.

²⁸ *Naw*: missing "Indeed, Allāh does not love transgressors"... unto themselves. And He says:" *Dān*: missing "These are the people... wasteful."

²⁹ *Dān*: "And do not embody detestable characteristics so that you may be rewarded with eternal blessings in the gardens of Paradise."

³⁰ *Naw* and *Dān*: "In fact, more ignorant than him."

the harvest is reaped in the afterlife."³¹ When this world comes to an end and the tools which he could have used for sowing are taken away, and the seeds of worldly appetites do not turn green, then such a person will say: "O Lord! We have seen and heard, so send us back. We shall do the right thing, for we have come to believe with certainty" (32:12).³² But this plea will not be heard, and it will be said in reply: "Remain condemned in it, and do not speak to Me" (23:108).

21. My friend, accept this advice and do not share in the arrogance of Satan (a verse):

Sow seeds today, for tomorrow
Nothing will come of begging.

22. Pleading: "Pour a little water over us or give us a little of what God has given you" (7:50) will only increase [their] thirst, and no heart will be forgiven for crying: "O Lord! Our misery overwhelmed us" (23:106). Do not leave today's task onto tomorrow. One must be industrious, not lazy; one must be extraordinary, not common;³³ one must be thankful, not disbelieving. Unbelief consists of not recognizing the nature of God's blessings contained in what He has said regarding the reality of your being. As a consequence, you make this life—which is itself a great blessing—into an assemblage of disobedience to God. Indeed, a disbeliever is not only one who has not physically uttered the profession of faith; anyone who is deprived of the meaning of this formula is also a disbeliever. One must strive so that not one precious soul is lost, and that you accord the just due of every soul, which is a noble substance (*jawharī az jawāhir-i sharīfa*). Thus might you be among those who are thankful for God's blessings.

23. I was talking about lights and suddenly I left that issue. Let me now return to the subject at hand. When I was describing the lights of the inner mystery, spirit, inmost being, heart and soul, I did not remember the light of Satan. It appears necessary that I explain the light of fire and describe its characteristics lest the mystic in seclusion (*khalwatī*) think that Satan does not enter into anything which possesses the attribute of luminescence.

24. One must know, then, that the light of Satan, which is manifested in the beginning, is like a puppet of foul-colored fire. He sees its curtain on the face of the earth covering everything with a dark red fire; a drop of black blood becomes obscured on the face of this redness,³⁴ and the heart [47v] is constricted³⁵ by looking at it so that the mystic can only engage in recollection with difficulty. All his body parts ache, such that you might say he was suffer-

³¹ Not a canonical *ḥadīth* but a well known proverb.

³² *Car*: missing "for we have come to believe with certainty."

³³ *Dān*: "One must be attentive (*ḥādhir*), not heedless (*ghāfil*)."

³⁴ *Naw* and *Dān*: "A spot like dark blood appearing on the face of that redness."

³⁵ *Naw* and *Dān*: miserable.

ing a seizure at this time. But when he recalls his master with complete concentration and occupies himself with recollection, the puppet falls to the earth and the foul-colored curtain turns to nought. The mystic's body feels light, and pure recollection flows on his tongue. Then the fire of recollection starts to rise, and the mystic experiences a state of pleasure and ease.

25. One must know, furthermore, that every part of the mystic's body has a specific light, and every act of devotion also has a light. The details of these lights are beyond the scope of this treatise. "None knows the armies of your Lord save Himself" (74:31). Earlier masters, may God sanctify their spirits, have not written as much as I have committed to paper lest pretenders present these as their own ideas and ensnare mystics in the net of their deception.³⁶ But the strength of that friend's [i.e. Muḥammad-i Khurd] will was such that I have explained an infinitesimal amount of the secrets of illumination. And in this state it occurred to me that God (may He be exalted) says: "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; yet He leads astray none but those who transgress, who, having sealed it, break God's covenant, dividing what He ordained joined; and those who spread corruption in the land will surely suffer" (2:26-27). Know that going astray and being rightly guided are by His command Who "thereby guides whosoever He wishes, and leads astray whosoever He wishes." "Whoever is guided by God is rightly guided, but whosoever goes astray will not find a guide to show him the right path" (18:17).³⁷ I eliminated my own volition and was content with God's judgement, and entrusted control of the pen of elucidation to the fingers. And inasmuch as He wishes, He writes the meanings of the invisible dimension on the page of the visible, and seats the blessed people at His sumptuous table, and relegates the wretched to the torments and pits of hell for disbelieving in the lights.³⁸ "God does as He wishes" (14:27) "and ordains what He wills" (5:1).

26. The purpose of this is to say that when the mystic sees the effect³⁹ within himself (which is the acceptance of the words of mystical saints), he put his foot forward on the mystical path with full confidence. He then witnesses the lights, obtains knowledge of the signs of the path, and comprehends the real nature of the removal of the veils and lifting of the covers. It is vital that, until his dying breath, he should not be heedless for one instant, since the veil of darkness falls in every instant in the visible realm which is itself nothing but absolute darkness and nothingness. If he is not occupied with the removal of this veil, veils upon veils [48r] will descend and the lights will disappear

³⁶ *Naw and Dān*: "... present this as the world of their own religious message and hurl mystics into the trap of their own deception."

³⁷ *Dān*: "Going astray and perishing are not by His command: 'He leads astray whom He will and guides whom He will' (93:16 and others), 'and he is rightly guided, but whosoever goes astray will not find a guide to show him the right path' (18:17)."

³⁸ *Dān*: missing "and relegates the wretched... the lights."

³⁹ *Naw and Dān*: add "of this divine favor (*ṭawfiq*)."

behind the curtain. [The mystic must be constantly occupied with their removal] lest Satan communicate false ideas to the soul and turn it away from the path so that it apostatizes.⁴⁰ The masters, may God sanctify their souls, have said: "one who apostatizes from the religious law (*sharīʿa*) attains his former status if he says the profession of faith: "There is no deity but God, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God" just once; but all the efforts of the humans and *jinn* cannot return to his former status one who apostatizes from the mystical path." May God protects us from apostasy after belief, from paucity after plenty.

27. Know, in addition, that ablution possesses a great light which illuminates the dark seclusion. This light resembles the sun and appears opposite the forehead of the mystic. As soon as the mystic raises his eyes to see it, it rises upwards until a mountain appears above the place of seclusion and that disc shines forth from above the head of the mystic and illuminates the entire place of seclusion. Most often this light appears when the mystic has returned from performing his ablutions and has occupied himself with offering thanks for their successful performance. However, in the end he sees the disc, which he [previously] saw above him, in the center of his own breast which is the place from which it comes out. This disc is subtler than the sun and its light is pure, having come out from behind the colored garment.

28. The novice mystic sees lights and a variety of colors just outside the place of seclusion, which is illuminated with a light by which one can see all the people of the world. This is the result of the fire of recollection's power. And sometimes a circle appears opposite the mystic and colored lights come out of it, just like a spring out of which water flows. This is the sign of the transformation of the inciteful and censorious soul (*nafs-i ammāra wa lawwāma*) through the attributes of comfort and contentment. But know that seventy thousand veils of light and darkness are in the mystic's path, just as the Prophet (may peace be upon him) has said but which is not explained in any book. I will discuss them here cursorily, summarizing them in seven curtains.

29. The first curtain is of the invisible realm of Satan which is turbid, and 10,000 veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the soul, the curtain of which is blue, and 10,000 additional veils must be removed at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the heart which is red and ruby-colored, and 10,000 veils must be destroyed in this stage. Then there is the curtain of the invisible realm of the inmost being, the color of which is white and extremely fine, and there are also 10,000 veils in this stage which must be lifted. After this is the curtain [48v] of the

⁴⁰ *Nawand Dān*: "Lest Satan communicate false ideas to the soul and cause it to grow tired of travelling the path [*Naw*: "true path"] so that it turns away from the course and apostatizes from the path."

invisible of the spirit. The color of this curtain is a very pleasing yellow and there are 10,000 more veils at this stage which must be illuminated. After this there is the curtain of the invisible of the inner mystery, the color of which is an awesome pure black, and 10,000 more veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the hiddenmost mystery (*ghayb al-ghuyūb*); the color of its curtain is green and 10,000 additional veils lie at this threshold. And all these veils relate to the mystic's being. It is he who is veiled by these veils which are brought about by God, not God that is veiled. Nothing can veil God.

30. After the lifting of these 70,000 veils he reaches the veil of "Divine Grandeur" (*ḥijāb-i kibriyā*) just as the Prophet (upon him be peace) says: "His veil is of light (fire, according to another tradition). If it were lifted, the splendor of His face would burn whatever turned its eyes towards it."⁴¹ It is necessary at this stage that he place his head on the threshold of supplication (*āstāna-yi ʿajz*) so that a rapturous occurrence (*jadhba*) from that realm might shine down on his body, overcome him and transport him to the divine presence, for this is the desired effect. If this does not happen, then he must become a servant at the threshold of eternity (*āstāna-yi samadiyyat*) and place his head upon the threshold of servitude (*āstāna-yi ʿubūdiyyat*) until such time that God opens that door through grace and bounty. The key to that door is in the hands of His beloved (upon him be peace), and one should not seek it from anyone but him lest one be eternally debarred.

31. It is my hope that my associates will want to discover this state through striving, not through words alone, so that they might become people who strive in religion. When their hearts' eye (*dida-yi jānishān*) is illuminated with these lights, let them remember this poor [mystic] with a small prayer. And let them deem it necessary to pray continually for the spirits of the masters, without the guidance of whose efforts, one cannot conclude this formidable journey. Let their tongues be continuously moving with prayers for the spirit of the "Joy of the World" [i.e. Muḥammad], upon him be the most eminent salutations and best prayers. Praise be to God at all times.⁴²

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⁴¹ This is a canonical tradition, versions of which are found in Muslim (Īmān, 293, 294); Ibn Māja (muqaddima 13); and Ibn Ḥanbal (4, 401, 405). Simnāni is quoting the tradition as recorded by Muslim. *Naw* ends at this point.

⁴² *Dān*: "And the blessings of God upon the best of His creatures, Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions."